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# Council



**Forest Heath**  
District Council

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Leader's Statement</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>COU/FH/19/002</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Council</b>	<b>20 March 2019</b>

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Today is a historic day for Forest Heath. But we are not shy of being at the forefront of historic moments.

Forest Heath has always been a dynamic council, looking to innovate and improve but always with our residents and businesses at the heart of what we do. We have always been looking to the future while making sure we protect those things in our past that makes our area so unique.

We are surrounded by heritage, visited by royalty for centuries and played our part by supporting military personnel past and present. At the same time we have brought world class industries to the area, have invested in largest of its kind solar farm and new technology and will be welcoming the latest fighter aircraft in the world. This has meant and will mean millions of pounds of investment to bring economic growth, jobs and prosperity for our residents.

Equally we have attracted and managed growth in our area making sure we get the homes we need now and for the generations that will be West Suffolk's future.

Having listened and taken part in impassioned debates around our council chamber we have held I know that we are all united by that desire to do the best for the communities we serve. I know that is why I became a councillor.

The work we and our officers carry out directly affect the lives our residents. We recognise we have a duty, entrusted in us, to look beyond the simple high quality services we deliver. Forest Heath has always been about looking forward. We have engaged with partners such as health, education, the police and county council colleagues to bring benefits greater than the sum of our parts.

We were in the vanguard of councils taking the bold step to fully share services with St Edmundsbury Borough Council that has brought millions of pounds of savings so we could invest in services. We have pioneered families and communities work, finding with our communities and local organisations shared initiatives and hundreds of thousands of pounds of funding over the years. A way of working that many councils are just catching up on.

It is an emotional day for many of us. I have been honoured and proud to lead this council. The dedication and passion councillors and officers show in doing the best job they can has always impressed me. Equally the compassion we have to help those in need is humbling. You only have to see how we work with the most vulnerable, those who often have nowhere to turn to, to see how we touch lives and make a difference.

Thank you to all of you who have served as councillors. I wish all of you good luck in the upcoming elections and for those not standing my sincere gratitude on behalf of the people you have served.

I think as we sit here tonight we can all reflect on those councillors and officers that have gone before us. Many of the names on the boards in and around the chamber or on dusty agendas may not be well known to all but each and every one stepped forward to give public service. We have, together, built on their achievements and legacy.

I believe the future is a bright and exciting one, full of opportunities and, as always in local government, challenges to meet and overcome. But I know the new West Suffolk Council is the best way to seize those challenges, to make sure we invest in the future and not only face those challenges, but in the same way as we always have, show how innovative we can be. We have already shown how by working across West Suffolk we are greater than the sum of our parts with a shared goals and ambitions for West Suffolk. Our new Council will build on that legacy and make a new shared history that I know other authorities will want to emulate.

Thank you all.

*Councillor James Waters*  
*Leader of Forest Heath District Council*